United Nations A/ES-10/428–S/2008/819

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
29 December 2008

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 27 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

It is with deepest regret that I inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, has unleashed a deadly rampage in the Gaza Strip today, resulting in the deaths of over 200 Palestinians, with many innocent children and women among the dead and wounded. In this regard, in flagrant violation and grave breach of the relevant rules and provisions of international law, Israeli F-16 warplanes and Apache helicopters dropped over 100 bombs on dozens of locations in the Gaza Strip in the mid-morning hours of 27 December 2008 (local time).

It is also being reported that more than 600 Palestinians were seriously wounded by the Israeli occupying forces in this latest round of brutal attacks. The hospitals in Gaza, which are already facing critical shortages of medical supplies and decaying equipment as a result of the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, are now exerting all efforts possible under such circumstances to treat those wounded in the attacks. It should be noted that for weeks before this latest campaign of death and destruction, Israel ensured the complete crippling of all vital sectors in the Gaza Strip, specifically, medical services and international humanitarian aid agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by banning much-needed aid from coming into the Gaza Strip. The situation in Gaza is catastrophic, and Israel, the occupying Power, is fully responsible for the deaths of scores of Palestinians who might not receive the medical treatment they need as a result of this criminal siege. Meanwhile, the rest of the population in the area, gripped by panic and fear and already suffering humanitarian hardship, are reported to be hiding in their homes. But even there they know they are not safe from the military strikes of the occupying Power.

The Palestinian leadership, under President Mahmoud Abbas, has declared a state of mourning and has expressed its sheer outrage at this savagery and holds the Government of Israel fully accountable for this irresponsible and criminal onslaught, which threatens to plunge the entire region into violence and hatred. It

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must be recalled that what we are witnessing now is the horrific materialization of the repeated threats made by several Israeli officials over the past months, who have threatened to launch large-scale military attacks against the Palestinian people under their occupation in the Gaza Strip. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that this latest aggression, "Operation Cast Lead", would continue for "as long as necessary". Such threats, combined with the actual killing of civilians and the destruction being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, which must be viewed with the utmost seriousness and vehemently condemned, require immediate action by the international community, including the Security Council.

Civilians under foreign occupation are entitled to protection under international humanitarian law. Moreover, it must be clearly and firmly reiterated that international humanitarian law absolutely prohibits reprisals against a civilian population. Real and immediate measures must be taken to avert the killing of even more innocent people as well as the uncontrollable spiral of the situation to irreversible depths, wherein the vicious and deadly cycle of violence will only worsen.

Given the grim situation just outlined and the humanitarian disaster that has befallen Gaza, the Palestinian leadership calls for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to address this dramatic deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At this time of crisis, we reiterate our call upon the international community to uphold international law in all circumstances and upon the Council to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter and to undertake immediate measures to address this grave situation being faced by the Palestinian people. Continued silence and paralysis will surely bring only more death and destruction.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 323 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 December 2008 (A/ES-10/427-S/2008/768), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in the annex to a future letter.)

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine

United Nations A/ES-10/429–S/2008/828

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
29 December 2008

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
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Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 29 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

This is our second letter in less than two days confirming our absolute condemnation of Israel's criminal military campaign against the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For three days, Israeli fighter jets have pounded hundreds of targets across the Gaza Strip, killing over 300 Palestinians and injuring almost 1,500 others. Gaza is no longer on the brink of disaster; it is living that disaster, which Israel, the occupying Power, has imposed on the one and a half million Palestinians it has imprisoned, starved, and tormented in Gaza under false and sinister pretexts.

We welcomed the statement of the Security Council calling for an immediate cessation to the unprecedented violence in Gaza, which was echoed in the statement of the Secretary-General issued yesterday and in that of the President of the General Assembly issued on 27 December, as well as similar international calls for an end to the bloodshed. However, the Palestinian leadership believes that additional and urgent steps need to be taken in the light of the alarming situation on the ground and given Israel's persistence in carrying out its brutal aggression in Gaza despite those calls.

Since those statements, the civilian population in Gaza has been living in constant horror, caught in an aggression that has turned every corner in the besieged strip into a target and transformed the homes of unsuspecting civilians into death traps. That was the tragic case of the Balusha family in the Jabalia refugee camp, where five girls were buried under the rubble of their home when a mosque targeted by Israeli missiles came crashing down on their home while they were sleeping.

Hospitals also have not been spared. Several hospitals have sustained heavy damage from Israeli bombardment carried out in utter disregard of internationally safeguarded positions, which has also included schools, houses of worship, universities, prisons and other institutions. These hospitals are facing diminishing

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supplies of crucially needed medicines and blood units because of the Israeli siege and are overwhelmed by the sheer number of casualties flooding their wards.

Israel has also introduced a new level of purely civilian targets to its long hit list in Gaza, targeting Gaza's Islamic University, schools, medical warehouses and paramedics. These flagrantly illegal and criminal acts must be condemned in the strongest terms and brought to an immediate end. The international community must not tolerate such perpetration of crimes and must come to bear its responsibility by enacting consequences for these crimes, lest it be a partner in further entrenching Israel's shameless impunity.

Israel's massive air strikes against targets in the densely populated Strip have also killed UNRWA trainees and staff members, including some who were inside an UNRWA facility. We strongly condemn those and all other brutal killings of innocent civilians. That is why we urge the Security Council to take immediate and effective action to uphold its standing responsibilities in accordance with the Charter and put an end to this bloodbath.

At the same time, we must not forget that Israel, as an occupying Power, has standing legal and moral obligations to protect the Palestinian civilian population and to ensure that they have full access to vital services. The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have a clear obligation to ensure that Israel fully abides by these responsibilities. Yet, Israel is violating all these obligations with impunity. Anything short of concrete action will only serve to encourage Israel to continue acting with impunity and in utter disregard of the principles and provisions of international law.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 324 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 27 December 2008 (A/ES-10/428-S/2008/819), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine

United Nations A/ES-10/430–S/2008/835

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
31 December 2008

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 30 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Palestinian death toll is mounting as a result of the ongoing indiscriminate and lethal military assaults being carried out by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of its brutal onslaught on Gaza, which started on 27 December 2008, more than 375 Palestinians, including children and women, have been killed by Israel, the occupying Power. Moreover, more than 1,750 Palestinians have been injured, many severely, and many will die from their injuries because of the dire situation facing the beleaguered hospitals in Gaza.

Despite the strong reaction to Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, and the reiteration of calls for an immediate ceasefire from all corners of the world to avert the dangerous spiralling of the situation on the ground, Israel persists in the escalation of its military assaults against the Gaza Strip, killing more Palestinians and further terrorizing the civilian population. As Israel, the occupying Power, launched airstrikes against the Gaza Strip for a fourth consecutive day, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called the bombardment "the first of several stages", suggesting that the onslaught against Gaza and its people was far from ending, and therefore repeating its rejection for an immediate ceasefire. The occupying Power, in fact, increased its number of warships along the Gaza shoreline and amassed more tanks and troops along the border.

Today, Israeli warplanes continued on with its airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, targeting civilian homes and properties, including a farm. In Beit Hanoun, a village in northern Gaza Strip, three Palestinian civilians were killed, including two sisters, Lama and Haya Hamdan, 4 and 11 years old respectively, as a result of a missile fired from an Israeli warplane. The four-year-old girl was killed instantly and her 11-year-old sister died en route to the hospital. Moreover, in addition to the death and destruction imposed on the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, an

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Israeli naval vessel rammed and shot at a boat with 16 medical volunteers aboard carrying 3.5 tons of medical aid to the Gaza Strip in international waters about 60 to 70 miles off Gaza.

Needless to say, the humanitarian situation has continued to drastically deteriorate as a result of the military attacks by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip who are already living in appalling conditions as a result of the 18-month Israeli siege on Gaza. Numerous international and aid organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) continue to call on Israel to ensure that medical supplies are delivered to those hit by the military attacks. In a statement released today, WHO called for the deliverance of essential and life-saving medicines without delay and warned, as many other aid organizations have over the past couple of days, that the inability of the hospitals to cope with a problem of this magnitude, if the situation continues unchanged, will result in a surge in preventable deaths from complications due to trauma.

International humanitarian law and human rights law were created for the purpose of protecting human life and dignity everywhere and preventing such reckless and condemnable attacks against civilians and their property. Regrettably, however, the occupying Power has never respected international law and continues to commit systematic violations and grave breaches of the law. The lethal military assaults carried out by the occupying forces by its aerial bombardments have not only caused massive human carnage and widespread destruction of property in the area, but have also left the entire civilian population in a state of fear, panic and trauma. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for such grave breaches of the law and cannot be allowed to continue to act with such flagrant and vicious impunity.

Moreover, we reiterate our call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to act immediately to help to bring about an immediate ceasefire and respect for international law. Tangible measures must be taken to address this crisis and to avert its further dangerous decline; to aid the Palestinian civilian population, including by providing them with the necessary protection and assistance to help them cope with the humanitarian crisis they are facing, including through compelling the occupying Power to ensure unhindered access of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip; and to promote the calm needed to ultimately end this latest tragedy the Palestinian people are facing.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 325 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 29 December 2008 (A/ES-10/429-S/2008/828), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice (as all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter).

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(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
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